

Feudalism and the Manor System

Prepare to Read

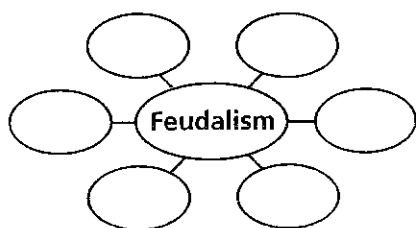
Objectives

In this section, you will

1. Learn when the Middle Ages were and what they were like.
2. Find out how land and power were divided under feudalism.
3. Learn how the manor system worked.
4. Discover what life was like for peasants and serfs.

Taking Notes

As you read this section, look for the major features of feudalism. Copy the web diagram below and record your findings in it.



A knighting ceremony

Target Reading Skill

Recognize Sequence Signal Words

Noting the order in which important events take place can help you understand how the events relate to one another. Sequence signal words, such as *first*, *then*, *began*, and *in [date]*, point out relationships in time. Look for such words in this section to help you understand the Middle Ages.

Key Terms

- **knight** (nyt) *n.* a man who received honor and land in exchange for serving a lord as a soldier
- **Middle Ages** (MID ul Ay juz) *n.* the years between ancient and modern times
- **medieval** (mee dee EE vul) *adj.* referring to the Middle Ages
- **feudalism** (FYOOD ul iz um) *n.* a system in which land was owned by kings or lords but held by vassals in return for their loyalty
- **manor** (MAN ur) *n.* a large estate, often including farms and a village, ruled by a lord
- **serf** (surf) *n.* a farm worker considered part of the manor on which he or she worked

As darkness fell, a young man put on a white tunic and red and black cloaks. Then he walked to the church, where he spent the long night alone, praying. Soon he would no longer be a mere squire, or knight-in-training. He would become a real knight, who would receive honor and land in exchange for serving his lord as a soldier.

The next morning, the squire entered the castle courtyard, where knights and ladies had gathered. His lord presented him with his sword, spurs, and shield. The squire knelt. Then he felt the lord's sword lightly tap him on each shoulder. "In the name of God, Saint Michael, and Saint George, I call you a knight," declared the lord. "Be loyal, brave, and true."

A knight was expected to be loyal to the lord who knighted him. His lord was loyal to a more powerful lord or king. Knights and lords protected the less powerful people loyal to them. This system held society together.

The Middle Ages

thousand years ago, scenes like the one you just read about took place throughout Western Europe. These were the times of knights in shining armor, lords and ladies, and castles and cathedrals. These were the Middle Ages, the years between ancient times and modern times.

Historians usually say that ancient times lasted until about A.D. 500 and that modern times started about 1500. The period in the middle, the Middle Ages, is also called the medieval period. *Medieval* comes from Latin words that mean "middle ages."

The Collapse of the Roman Empire The Middle Ages began with the collapse of the Roman Empire in Western Europe. For centuries, the Roman Empire had provided order and stability in the region. It had spread its culture, the Latin language, and Christianity across the continent. Over time, however, the Roman Empire grew weak. It suffered economic and social troubles. Worse, the Roman Empire also suffered from invasions by peoples from the north.

Bronze plaque of a Lombard warrior

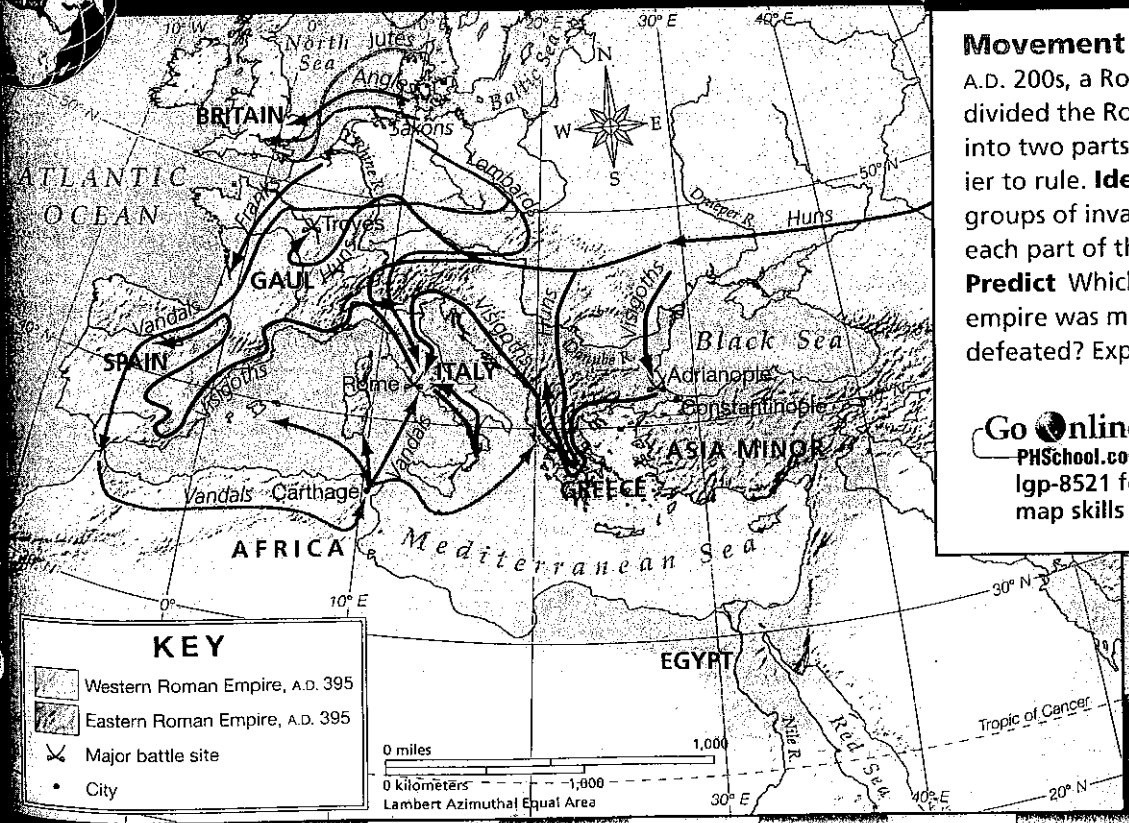


Invasions of the Roman Empire

MAP MASTER Skills Activity

Movement In the late A.D. 200s, a Roman emperor divided the Roman Empire into two parts to make it easier to rule. **Identify** Which groups of invaders attacked each part of the empire? **Predict** Which part of the empire was more likely to be defeated? Explain why.

Go Online
PHSchool.com Use Web Code
lgp-8521 for step-by-step
map skills practice.





The Emperor Charlemagne

In return for Charlemagne's support of the Church, Pope Leo III crowned him emperor in 800. **Analyze Images** How does this statue show Charlemagne's greatness and power?



Recognize Sequence Signal Words

Which two words in the third sentence of the paragraph at the right signal sequence?

In wave after wave, the invaders destroyed Roman towns and cut off trade routes. They claimed parts of the empire for themselves. Because these peoples kept their own languages and laws, they broke the bonds that had held the Roman Empire together.

By about A.D. 500, the Roman Empire in Western Europe had completely collapsed. It was replaced by a patchwork of small kingdoms. Reading and writing were in danger of disappearing from Europe because many of the invading groups could not do either.

Charlemagne Reunites Western Europe One of the invading groups was the Franks. They claimed the area called Gaul, which is now France. In fact, the name *France* comes from the word "Franks." In 768, a skilled military leader named Charlemagne (SHAH-ruh mayn) became king of the Franks.

At the time, the many small kingdoms of Western Europe were often at war with one another. Charlemagne expanded his kingdom by conquering these weaker kingdoms. Soon, he ruled an empire that stretched across most of Western Europe.

Charlemagne ruled his empire for nearly 50 years. During that time he worked hard to keep Western Europe united. He established schools throughout the land to promote learning and culture. He spread the Christian religion. He issued money and improved the economy. Western Europe had not been so prosperous or so united since the time of the Roman Empire.

After Charlemagne's death, his empire was divided among his three sons. They fought one another, weakening the empire. Other groups also attacked the weakened empire. Perhaps the fiercest attacks were made by the Vikings.

Attacks From the North The Vikings came from the far north of Europe—present-day Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. They were skilled sailors and tough warriors. Their attacks began around 800 and continued for about 300 years. Relying on surprise, the Vikings burned and looted European towns. But they also reopened trade routes to Mediterranean lands and beyond. And they settled in other parts of northern Europe, mixing with the local populations. Even so, the Vikings did not unite these lands into a lasting empire.

✓ **Reading Check** Why did Charlemagne's empire fall apart?

Feudalism

Charlemagne's empire was gone. Western Europe was again divided into many small kingdoms. Viking attacks were a constant threat. Life was dangerous. Slowly, the people of Europe worked out a new system for meeting their military, political, and economic needs.

The Feudal System The system that developed was called feudalism. Under feudalism, land was owned by kings or lords but held by vassals in return for their loyalty. By about 1000, feudalism was the way of life throughout Western Europe. It would last for hundreds of years.

In medieval Europe, power belonged to those who controlled the land. These landowners were nobles, such as barons and princes. They gave a share of land, called a fief (feef) to each of their vassals, who promised to follow the landowner's laws and to fight for him. A vassal could also be a lord.

Feudal Duties Lords promised to treat their vassals with honor. In addition, the chief duty of lords was to protect their vassals and their lands. If a vassal with young children died, for example, the lord became the children's protector. The lord also asked his vassals' advice before making laws or going to war.

Vassals were expected to raise and lead armies that would fight for their lord. Many of these vassals were knights—professional horse soldiers who led other men into battle. Vassals also appeared at the lord's court when commanded to do so. And they paid taxes, often in the form of crops, to their lords.

Reading Check What did lords give vassals in exchange for the vassals' loyalty?

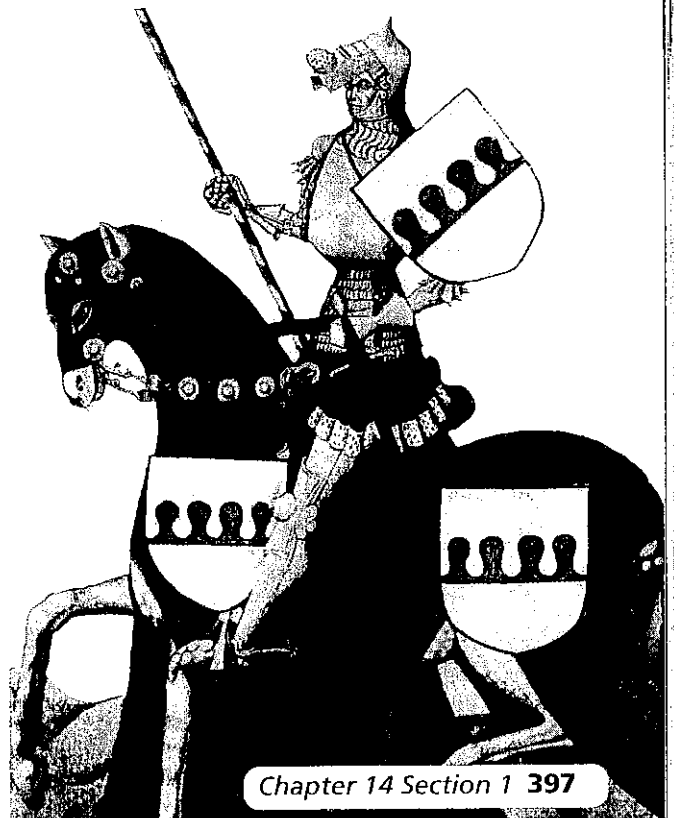
The Manor System

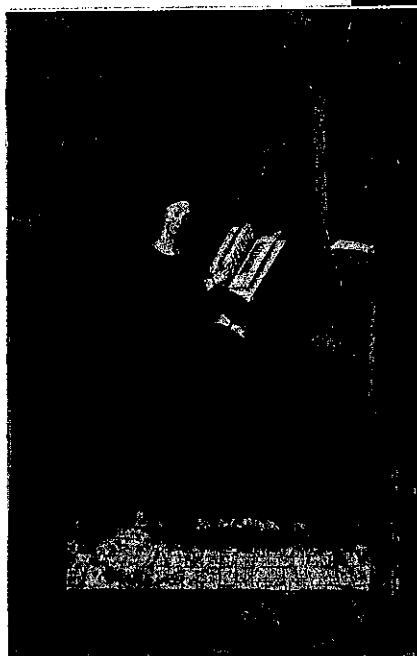
In medieval Europe, feudalism was a system of power and economic relations across regions. Manorialism was a system of economic and political life at the local level. This system was based on the manor, a large estate that included farm fields, pastures, and often an entire village. It also included a large house, called the manor house, where the lord, or ruler, of the manor lived.

Links Across The World

Vikings in America The Vikings did not limit their conquests to Europe. They went as far south as North Africa. Viking ships, such as the one shown below, also traveled westward to Greenland and beyond. An Icelandic saga, or story, gives clues about the location of Vinland, a Viking settlement in lands west of Greenland. Historians who have studied these clues and examined ruins in North America think that Vinland was probably in what is now Newfoundland, Canada.

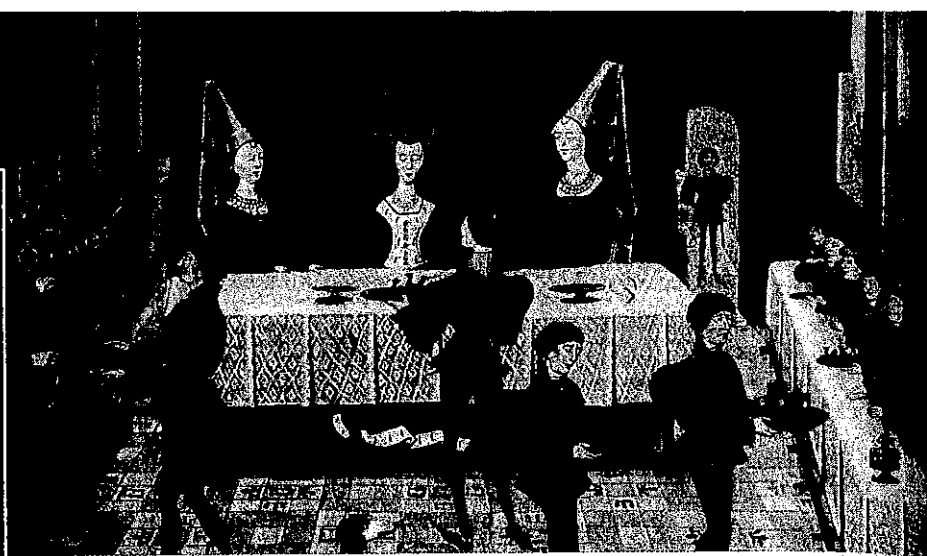
A medieval knight in armor





Noblewomen at Home

The larger illustration shows a lady in charge of a dinner where her guests are seated according to rank. A noblewoman sits at her desk in the smaller illustration. **Generalize** What can you infer about the lives of noblewomen from these illustrations?



Lords and Manors The lord of the manor was typically a vassal of a king or of a more powerful lord. The manor was part of his fief. Most manors were far from towns, villages, and other manors. Therefore, they had to be self-sufficient, or able to supply their own needs. Food, clothing, and other things needed by the people who lived on the manor were made there.

A lord depended on the wealth his manor provided. He ruled over his manor—and the poor people who lived there. He made the rules and acted as judge. He decided who would oversee the farming and other daily work. And he collected taxes from the peasants who lived on the manor.

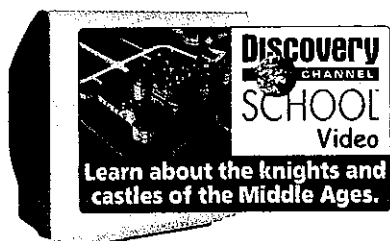
The Role of Noblewomen Women of the noble classes also played an important part in feudal society. Like the men in her family, a noblewoman went to other noble families for training. Then, she took her place as lady of the household. She managed the household, performed necessary medical tasks, and supervised servants. When her husband or father was away fighting, she often served as “lord of the manor,” making important decisions.

✓ **Reading Check** Why did manors have to be self-sufficient?

Peasants and Serfs

The majority of the people of medieval Europe were not lords, ladies, or knights. They were peasants, a group of people who made their living as farmers and laborers. Their lives were very different from the lives of the nobles.

Peasants were often very poor. They did all of the work on the manors of the Middle Ages. They farmed the lord’s fields to raise food for his household. They were only allowed to farm a small strip of land for themselves. Even so, they had to give part of their own harvest to their lord.

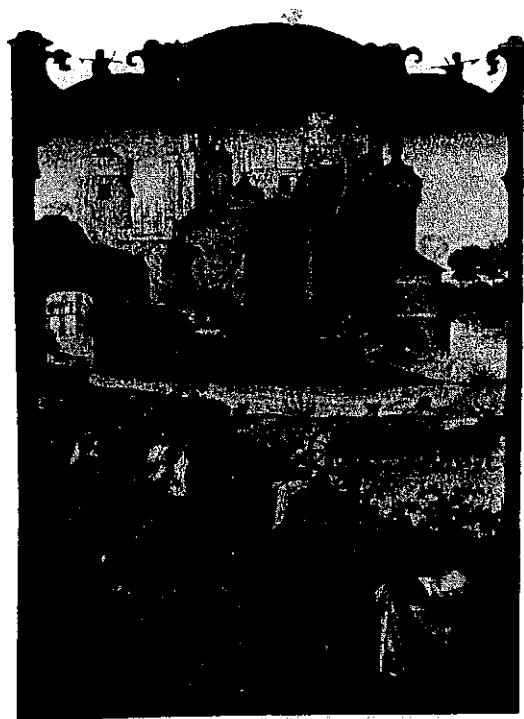


Tied to the Manor Most peasants were also serfs. Serfs were peasants who were considered to be part of the manor. When a noble was given a manor as part of his fief, its serfs became his. They could not leave the manor, or even get married, without his permission.

Although serfs were tied to manors, they were not quite slaves. A successful serf could save enough money to buy his freedom and his own plot of land. A serf who escaped to a city and lived there for a year and a day without being caught also became free. Most however, remained serfs their whole lives.

A Hard Life Medieval peasants worked hard for most of their lives. They farmed their own fields and those of their lord. Men, women, and children were all required to work.

Peasants lived in one-room huts that often had only a single opening for a window. For heating and cooking, they built a fire on the dirt floor. Smoke filled the dark, cramped interior before drifting out of a hole in the roof. Peasants ate mostly simple foods such as black bread, cabbage, and turnips. They rarely ate meat, since the animals of the manor and surrounding land were reserved for their lord. Peasants even suffered when they slept: their mattresses were cloth sacks stuffed with straw.



Peasant Life

Peasant women worked in the fields along with the men. **Contrast** Use this illustration and those on page 398 to contrast the lives of peasant women and noblewomen.

Reading Check What was life like for medieval peasants?

Section 1 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.

Target Reading Skill

Review the text under the heading The Collapse of the Roman Empire. List the words that signal the order of events.

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Recall** When were the Middle Ages?

(b) Identify Cause and Effect

Why did the collapse of the Roman Empire lead to a new age in Western Europe?

2. (a) **Define** What was feudalism?

(b) **Explain** How did the system of feudalism work?

3. (a) **Describe** How was a manor organized?

(b) **Conclude** Why did a manor produce a wide variety of goods?

4. (a) **Explain** What was the relationship of a serf to his or her manor?

(b) **Infer** How and why might a serf become free?

Writing Activity

During the Middle Ages, most poor peasants remained poor their entire lives. Why do you think this was so? Write a paragraph explaining what you think the reason or reasons were.

Go Online
PHSchool.com

For: An activity on feudalism
Visit: PHSchool.com
Web Code: lgd-8501

Section 1: Feudalism and the Manor System
Europe in the Middle Ages**Guided Reading and Review****A. As You Read**

Directions: As you read Section 1, complete the chart with information about feudalism and the manor system. Write two details for each category.

Need for Feudalism	1. 2.
Feudal System	3. 4.
Manor System	5. 6.
Peasants and Serfs	7. 8.

B. Reviewing Key Terms

Directions: Complete these sentences by writing the correct terms in the blanks provided.

9. A _____ served a lord as a soldier.
10. The period in Europe between A.D. 500 and 1500 is the _____.
11. Charlemagne was one of the great kings during _____ times.
12. Under _____, lords and kings owned the land.
13. A lord's _____ was a large, self-efficient estate.
14. A _____ worked on a manor.

Section 1: Feudalism and the Manor System
Europe in the Middle Ages

Section Quiz

A. Key Terms

Directions: Define each of the following terms. Write your definitions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. feudalism
2. medieval
3. knight
4. manor
5. serf
6. Middle Ages

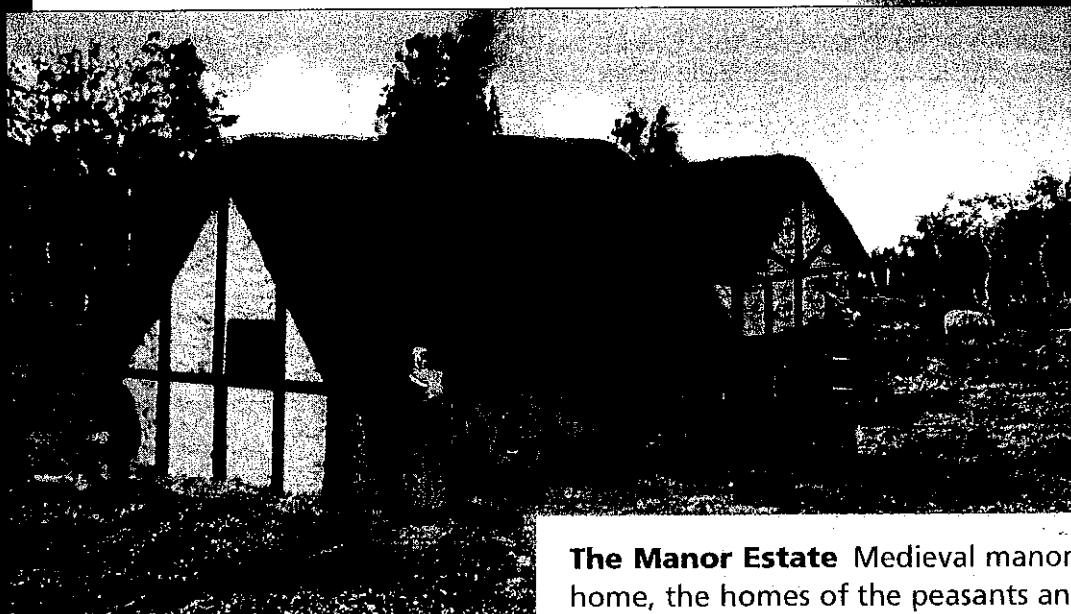
B. Main Ideas

Directions: Write the letter of the correct answer in each blank.

- _____ 7. When were the Middle Ages?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. before medieval times | c. after modern times |
| b. between ancient and modern times | d. between medieval and ancient times |
- _____ 8. Who was Charlemagne?
- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. king of the Vikings | c. a Roman emperor |
| b. a French serf | d. king of the Franks |
- _____ 9. What is a fief?
- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. a ruler of the Franks | c. land given in exchange for loyalty |
| b. a ruler in Charlemagne's empire | d. a Viking warrior |
- _____ 10. What did noblewomen do in feudal society?
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. managed the household | c. worked in the fields |
| b. trained as knights | d. helped peasants escape |

Focus On A Medieval Manor

Although peasants and nobles led very different lives, their reliance on the lands of the manor estate bound them together. Peasants worked the land to pay what they owed to their lords. Nobles depended on what the peasants produced so that they could pay taxes to higher nobles and to the king. In addition to cash, taxes were paid in grain, bread, fence posts, shingles and planks, linen cloth, shirts, honey, chickens, eggs, cheese, and butter. All of these goods were produced on the manor estate.



A peasant's house

The Manor Estate Medieval manors included the lord's home, the homes of the peasants and serfs, a mill for grinding grain, and often a chapel or a church. Attached to the manor house, or in a separate building, was a bakery that peasants and serfs would use for baking bread.

Most people in medieval Europe were agricultural workers. The lands and forests surrounding the manor and peasant houses provided grain, fruits, and vegetables. Peasants grazed cattle, sheep, and goats in the manor fields. Their pigs roamed the manor's woodlands in search of food. Woodlands also provided timber for building and fuel. Hunting in the forests was reserved for the nobles.

The illustration on the facing page shows a manor estate of the Middle Ages. At the top of this page is a shield painted with a noble's coat of arms.

A Manor Feast ►

This illustration from the 1400s shows a duke feasting with his family and friends. In medieval times, guests brought their own knives to feasts, and many foods were eaten with the fingers. Diners often shared cups and dishes. Musicians, acrobats, and jugglers provided entertainment.



Manor House

A lord's house could be built of wood, stone, or clay bricks.

Village

These houses were usually made of wood and roofed with thatch—tightly bundled straw or reeds.

Mill

Peasants paid a fee to grind their grain.

Fields

Crops were planted in strips in two fields. A third field lay fallow, or unplanted.

Assessment

Describe What are the characteristics of a medieval manor?

Draw Conclusions Describe the relationship between the nobles and peasants. How did they depend upon one another and on the manor's lands?